DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 345 206 CS 010 928

AUTHOR Hyde, Diana DeShazo
TITLE Evaluating Student Learning in Language Arts in the Primary Grades through Whole Language Assessment Techniques.
PUB DATE 92
NOTE 108p.; Ed.D. Practicum, Nova University. Some supplementary material may not reproduce clearly.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Check Lists; Cognitive Style; Grade 2; *Language Arts; Primary Education; *Student Evaluation; *Whole Language Approach
IDENTIFIERS *Alternative Assessment; Reading Behavior

ABSTRACT

A practicum sought to measure and document real learning in natural circumstances through the use of whole language assessment techniques involving observation checklists on which skills for the language arts (writing, spelling, reading) were listed. Skills were measured using descriptor words such as "stable," "evident," and "not evident" in order to plot a student's progress in literacy development in a positive way. A reading behavior form was also included. This classified students into one of three learning groups, according to the answers given to a list of seven questions; emphasis was on behavior and learning style. These alternative assessment forms were collected in a simplified seven-page booklet format for each student. Not only could the student's skills be assessed quickly through check marks in the appropriate columns, but his or her style of learning was also included in the booklet. Results indicated that teachers who used the Observation Checklist preferred this type of assessment to the report card format, and found instructional decisions easier to make when using these forms. (Two tables of data are included; 37 references and 7 appendixes--containing a questionnaire, the checklists, the reading behavior form, and learning activities handouts--are attached.) (Author/SR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Diana Hyde
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED345206

Evaluating Student Learning in Language Arts in the Primary Grades through Whole Language Assessment Techniques

by

Diana DeShazo Hyde

Cluster 34

A Practicum II Report presented to
the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Education.

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1992

CS010928

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

Verifier: _____

Principal
Title
3655 Holloway Road
Pineville, Louisiana 71360

_____
Date

This practicum report was submitted by Diana DeShazo Hyde under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

February 23, 1992
Date of Final Approval of Report

Georgianna Lowen
Georgianna Lowen, Ed.D.
Adviser

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thank yous to the faculty at J. I. Barron Elementary School in Pineville, Louisiana, where this practicum was carried out. It has been a pleasure to work with this group.

Also, a special thank you to Bob Haselman, not only my new husband, but my best friend. He has been my Rock of Gibralter throughout this whole program.

And last, thank you to my mentor, Dr. William Anderson, who planted the seed of the idea in my mind for this practicum.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT. iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS. iv

ABSTRACT. vi

Chapter

I INTRODUCTION. 1

Description of Work Setting and Community. . . 1
Writer's Work Setting and Role. 2

II STUDY OF THE PROBLEM. 10

Problem Description. 10
Problem Documentation. 12
Causative Analysis. 15
Relationship of the Problem to the Literature 17

III ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS. 26

Goals and Expectations. 26
Behavioral Objectives. 26
Measurement of Objectives. 27

IV SOLUTION STRATEGY. 31

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions. . . . 31
Description and Justification for Solutions Selected. 38
Report of Action Taken. 39

V RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS. 49

Results. 50
Discussion. 53
Recommendations. 56
Dissemination. 57

REFERENCES. 58

BIBLIOGRAPHY. 61

Appendices. 62

A QUESTIONNAIRE: AWARENESS OF DEVELOPING LITERACY. 63

B CHECKLIST FOR ACCEPTABLE STORIES. 65

C OBSERVATION CHECKLIST FOR LITERACY DEVELOPMENT. . 67

D SYSTEMATIC OBSERVATION CHECKLIST FOR ORAL READING OF ORIGINAL STORIES. 73

E READING BEHAVIOR FORM. 75

F PORTFOLIO CHECKLIST. 79

G LEARNING ACTIVITIES HANDOUTS. 84

LIST OF TABLES

Table

1: Developing Literacy. 13

2: Behavioral Objective Rating Scale. 52

ABSTRACT

Evaluating Student Learning in Language Arts in the Primary Grades through Whole Language Assessment Techniques. Diana DeShazo Hyde, Pineville, Louisiana, 1991-1992: Practicum II Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Descriptors: Alternative Assessment/Ecological Evaluation/Primary Evaluation/Language Arts Assessment/Whole Language Assessment/Evaluation/Assessment Techniques/Observation Checklists/Systematic Observation/Literacy Development/ Teacher Observation.

This practicum sought to measure and document real learning in natural circumstances through the use of whole language assessment techniques: Observation checklists on which skills for the language arts (writing, spelling, reading) were listed; the skills of students were measured using descriptor words such as stable, evident, and not evident. In this way, a student's progress along the road of literacy development was plotted in a positive way.

A reading behavior form was also included. This classified students into one of three learning groups, according to the answers given to a list of seven questions; emphasis was on behavior and learning style.

These alternative assessment forms were collected in a very simplified seven page booklet format, with a place on the front for the student's name. Not only could the student's skills be assessed quickly through check marks in the appropriate columns, but his or her style of learning was also included in the booklet (through the Reading Behavior Form).

Results of the practicum exceeded the author's expectations in that teachers were anxious to try the alternative evaluation forms. It was unusual to be able to grade students without comparing them with each other. Because of the security the teachers felt with letter grades, the author designed grade scales so that checks could be converted into letter grades.

****

Permission Statement

As a student in the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies, I do (✓) do not ( ) give permission to Nova University to distribute copies of this practicum report on request from interested individuals. It is my understanding that Nova University will not charge for this dissemination except to cover the costs of microfiching, handling, and mailing of the materials.

March 23, 1992 (date)

Diana Hyde (signature)

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Work Setting and Community

The author worked in a seventeen-year old elementary school with an enrollment of 650 students and thirty-nine classroom teachers, located in a middle socioeconomic neighborhood. The economy is supported by industry and farming, with some of the local industries being agriculture (cotton gin work) and health care services.

The school is located in a country setting, with no houses or businesses close by. Most students ride buses to school, as none live within walking distance. The land is hilly and wooded, with the school plant situated in a valley. The building was a basic H shape until 1989, when another complete wing was added, which increased the size of the school by one-third. The new wing is designated as the Kindergarten-First Grade wing.

The school was opened in 1974 and today employs, in addition to the thirty-nine teachers, two media specialists, ten lunchroom personnel, two secretaries, three janitors, one psychologist, and one principal.

There were five sections each of kindergarten, first and second grades, and four sections each of third, fourth, and fifth grades.

The Parents' Club was very active, although in a low-profile way. The school parents voted in the spring of 1990 to institute the wearing of uniforms by the student population, beginning in the fall of 1991. There was much discussion and local news coverage of this decision, as this school was the first one in this school district to mandate the wearing of uniforms.

The principal is a strong authoritarian figure, maintaining a very visible presence. He is totally aware of the school's responsibility to the community, and tries to present to the public a school of impeccable reputation with professionals of the highest calibre employed.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The work setting was the five second grade classrooms, serving twenty students each. Each classroom was large enough to have learning centers, in particular a library or reading center. In each room were prominent chart displays, which featured the vocabulary words promoted in individual lessons in the basal reader. These charts were part of the adopted reading program, and are equipped

with a transparent overlay sheet, which may be written on with water color pens and wiped off. Also on display were the week's spelling words.

English was encouraged, in that teachers were well supplied with English workbooks and an English resource kit which contained practice, reteaching, and enrichment blackline masters. These papers were sometimes put on display, after grading.

Teachers were encouraged to display library books in an inviting way, so that students would be motivated to read. As students were allowed only one class trip to the library each week, teachers felt that they needed to compensate with additional books. Some even brought books from their homes.

In promoting the language arts, teachers designed writing sheets and shared them for creative writing. These were often put on display in the rooms.

All bulletin boards were captioned. Seatwork assignments were put in a reserved area on the chalkboard; students read and did these independently.

The language arts were also promoted by the school system mandate that students must engage in language arts two periods a day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. These periods were clearly delineated in

the teachers' planbooks. In the reading program, it was expected that one story would be covered over a period of four to five days, with a key skill being taught the first day, vocabulary words the second day, a background and purpose set for reading the third day, then silent and oral guided reading the fourth and fifth days. It was also expected that the teachers would follow these designated steps, so much so that the steps had been printed and handed out to all the teachers.

During the two language-arts periods, English and writing were included.

Students were grouped for reading according to ability, with a minimum of two groups in each room. Some teachers had a small third group, which usually consisted of two or three students who needed extra help.

Each second grade teacher had an aide for forty minutes a day. Her job was to listen to students read orally, although she sometimes did other needed jobs. The job description was narrowed because of the fact that it became known that some students were never heard reading orally. Their "turn to read" virtually never came.

Grouping of students was to be evident; therefore, the teachers set aside a section of their rooms for the "reading center." In this way, administrators were assured that the school system mandate was being followed. Each teacher's reading center was unique; one teacher used a beanbag and odd, comfortable chairs; another teacher included her reading bookshelf; one teacher had a setup for her overhead projector in her reading center.

Student learning was supported by positive classroom atmospheres. Students were encouraged to work independently, especially in reference to the assigned seatwork listed on the chalkboard. Different learning styles were not encouraged, as the administration of the school preferred to see students sitting in their desks quietly attending to their work. Bustling activity was not looked upon as a conducive learning atmosphere.

Teachers were tied to the teachers' manuals, in that they were expected to follow them somewhat judiciously, especially when it came to reading. They did, however, like to use new ideas, when they felt the ideas were acceptable. They were generally open to suggestions.

Periodical assessments of learning were formal and one-dimensional. They were in the form of standardized

tests, on which students pencil in the circle by the correct response. Once every six weeks, an extensive English and reading test is given to determine whether the students have mastered the units of material. Of course, all during the six weeks, second grade students were given smaller periodic tests, much like the weekly spelling tests. Most of these tests judge memory recall, as they were multiple choice, true-false, and matching. They rarely call for genuine thinking on the part of the student.

Publishers of the textbooks provided the standardized tests. The same language was used in the test booklets as was used in the textbooks. If a teacher had not taught in just the language and way that was outlined in the teacher's manual, then the students would find themselves unfamiliar with what the test questions were wanting.

The author was working with all of the second grades. This consisted of one hundred students and four other teachers. These teachers had a thirty minute planning period each day, during which all the second grades had physical education. During this time, they were expected to have parent conferences, if called for. A forty-five minute library period once a week was allowed for each

class. Teachers could use the library at any time. Some checked out a large quantity of books and let the students "check out" books from themselves.

Most students were white, middle class socio-economically, and scored above average on standardized tests. Only two percent were repeating second grade, as the general policy of the school was to hold back students in the first grade, if a problem was suspected. Approximately five percent of the second grade student body had some type of learning problem, and four percent were considered gifted. These assessments were made through individual testing programs within the school. Only three of the students with learning problems actually went to a special class (LD) for a period of time each day; all of the gifted students spent approximately one hour in the gifted classroom each day.

Resource people, in the form of a psychologist, two media specialists, a learning disability teacher, and a speech teacher were available. The psychologist had a very full schedule, and was seeing only one second grader, who was in the author's room.

The media specialists were very helpful. They realized that equipment was not plentiful, and tried to work schedules so that all was fair. Two VCR machines

were shared by all teachers, and some teachers did not have cassette players and/or overhead projectors. One of their services was to grant teacher requests to find books or information on certain subjects. Once they received a topic, they gathered the material and sent it to the teacher's room.

Parent involvement was welcome in the school; parents were encouraged to be interested and supportive. They were in charge of t-shirt and sweatshirt sales featuring the school logo. Many of them served as substitute teachers. Keeping communication lines open and functioning was the number one priority of the school. Parents were kept well informed through professional looking communiques sent from the front office.

The parents' organization was called "The Parent Club." This organization was independent of other parent clubs, as the principal felt that national organizations were besieged with rules and regulations which he did not want his school people to have to deal with.

The author's role was that of the classroom teacher; she perceived herself as being a facilitator and assessor of student learning. Her experience had been that of teaching in a first grade classroom for seven years. She has always been interested in the processes

a child chooses to use in the learning situation. It is well noted that students enjoy stories that are familiar to them, yet seem to have problems with stories used to teach reading. Therefore, the author wrote her version of teaching reading, emphasizing skills in the booklet "From the Bottom Up: Reading Literacy." She presented this to the International Reading Association Conference in 1986; an account of this was featured in a newspaper article in the Alexandria Daily Town Talk.

During the school year of 1989-1990, the author explored her interest in expressive writing of young children by carrying out a project supporting first graders' growth as writers through whole language strategies. This project was called "Winslow the Bear and the Author's Chair." In it, students were motivated toward voluntary involvement in literacy activities and increased quality and quantity of writing. This project was published in Resources in Education (1990) and also in Outstanding Educational Improvement Projects (Nova University, 1991). It has been accepted in the ERIC (Educational Resource Information Center) data base, and will be published in the Journal of Language Experience in the spring of 1992.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

The problem was that the measuring and documenting of real learning in natural circumstances was not being done in the author's workplace. Teachers were tied to the step-by-step product-producing methods outlined in the teachers' manuals, and were not aware of and did not make use of whole language activities and assessments to promote real literacy. Informal, process assessments had not been treated as valid. Procedures such as systematic observation of students had been greatly devalued.

One reason for this problem was that teachers did not know what to look for in developing literacy. They did not realize that there are definite signs students exhibit as they grow in literacy. For example, when a child writes creatively and asks about punctuation, this is a literacy sign; a sign that he or she is growing into more sophisticated writing, and wants to learn. This can occur at any chronological age, and the punctuation skills should be taught at this time, when the student is ready for them. When a student starts putting s's on all words

because he or she senses that is the way to make plurals, this is another sign of literacy. This sends a message of growth; of readiness to learn plurals.

Teachers had ignored these signs in favor of a "faster and easier" assessment of students' progress: The standardized test. With this, teachers did not have to spend time observing students. All they had to do was put the material out there, give a test on how much the students heard and remembered, grade the tests, and produce a literacy report of A, B, C, D, or F. The student was deemed very literate if he or she could remember enough information to make an A, just literate if he or she could pull up enough information to make a B, and so on down to an F.

Teachers were not aware of and had not made use of ecological assessment procedures, which are: The measurement of one's proficiency in a subject by <u>doing</u>, as nearly as possible, the skill being measured (for example, assessing reading by watching the student read). This form of assessment is essentially the only <u>true</u> measurement of literacy, as the proof of knowing something is the actual doing of it. In the author's workplace, teachers were not measuring and documenting the attainment of literacy skills in this way; the measuring and documenting of real learning was not being done.

Problem Documentation

The author proved this problem was real through a questionnaire concerning the measurement of literacy development given to thirty-six other teachers; the results of the questionnaire were tabulated. The majority of the teachers indicated that there is a need for other methods of evaluating students in addition to standardized tests. Fourteen out of twenty-five of the teachers indicated they were not sure whether instructional decisions could be made based on students' behaviors. This supported the author's contention that teachers do not value their own observations of students, when they should put faith in those observations, more so than in the results of tests. These teachers did not realize that the real measurement of literacy was within their observations of students' behaviors (See Table 1).

The author examined a collection of second grade periodic unit tests on reading, done over a period of one year. Without exception, she found that the emphasis was on a one-time memory recall of specific information (product, not process). Students faced the task of interpreting pictures, which required a background of experience with those pictures, some of which were a walnut, a child falling down, a water hose, and a garage.

Table 1

Evaluating Developing Literacy

	Yes	No	Maybe
1. There is a need for other methods of evaluating students in addition to standardized tests.	20	2	3
2. A teacher can make instructional decisions regarding a student by observing his or her behavior.	11	7	7
3. The way in which inventive spelling is used by a student gives a clue of literacy development.	12	8	6
4. It is a good idea to measure daily or weekly progress.	23	2	2

Interpretation

The results of this questionnaire provide evidence that teachers are not measuring and documenting real learning.

In question one, the majority indicated that there is a need for other methods of evaluating students in addition to standardized tests.

Fourteen out of twenty-five of the teachers indicated they were not sure whether instructional decisions could be made based on students' behaviors.

Eight out of twelve agreed that the way in which inventive spelling is used gives a clue to literacy development, but six thought "maybe."

Most teachers agreed that it is a good idea to measure daily or weekly progress.

Note: Out of thirty-six teachers given the questionnaire, thirty returned it. It must be noted, however, that the information given cannot be counted as exact because of the way in which some marked the answers; some respondents skipped some items, while others marked two answers; still others wrote in comments in lieu of checking an answer.

In examining reading periodic unit test scores from students' cumulative folders, the author found that there were wide variations between the scores and the actual abilities of students. Some of the students who made low scores actually showed more literacy development in their attitudes toward books, their curiosity toward language, and their probing questions about how things work, than the higher scoring students.

While observing the act of test-taking, the author noted that the atmosphere was completely artificial: Thirty minutes of pencil to paper activity, with movement and interaction of any kind prohibited. It is a commonly accepted belief that quiet and isolation in test-taking is opportune to assure good scores. However, a tense atmosphere rarely induces a positive attitude of success. In testing, all students feel the aura of pressure, inducing such nervousness in some that they become unable to remember anything.

In trying to follow the steps given in the teachers' manuals, the author discovered that the interests of students are far too diversified and creative to be held in the lock-step processes given. They want to branch out and explore ideas of their own, which is not allowed in the teachers' manuals.

In personal, informal interviews, four second grade teachers expressed frustration at their inability to see progress in literacy development in some students. The author noted privately that literacy development was being demonstrated quite vividly in some students' behaviors, but, not recognizing the signs, the teachers would have cause to be frustrated.

Causative Analysis

The author cites many causes of the problem. One of the chief causes was that the importance of patterns in literacy development had not been recognized; teachers did not understand how or where to look for them. They did not realize that when a child uses inventive spelling, the way in which he or she uses letters is a pattern of literacy development; how a child picks up and handles a book is a pattern in literacy development; the kinds of questions a student asks about a story is a pattern in literacy development.

These teachers had been trained to take face value of the product, and not to look underneath and question the journey of how that product came to be; in other words, they had been trained not to be interested in the processes children use in their learning. Evaluating

the process should be the focus as, on any given day, the product may be flawed by a poor performance. Whereas, if there was an ongoing measurement of literacy development, one flawed performance would not be terminal. The teachers were not provided with training in this type of evaluation. Their training was in the form of final product evaluation. They learned how to make out tests and grade them. The application of letter grades has been used to signify overall literacy development, inspite of the fact that few people can understand and/or explain what an A, B, C, or D means. A comparison of some kind is implicated; it is an inevitable part of that grading system.

The administrators envisioned education as a business in which the final product is either acceptable or unacceptable. There are problems with this view, as many students who show lots of signs of literacy development do not measure up to the current grading system, and consistently are given low grades. This is a paradox, as they do become literate, but, according to school standards, they are an unacceptable product.

Textbook publishers have been given the right to dictate how professionals should "teach reading." School systems have bought into the idea that the people who

write the textbooks are close to infallible. There is so much money involved in textbook contracts that book publishers will undoubtedly write what they think will be accepted by school administrators. Publishers have always been very susceptible to trends and fads, and these things show up in the classroom textbooks, requiring the teacher to deal with them.

Since teachers have been trained to use letter grades, and, for the most part, feel comfortable with them, they did not want to assess without letter guidelines. Actually, they were afraid to trust their own observations and hunches; so often in the past, teacher judgments have been discredited in their own profession. Therefore, they were not sure that a check in the column "stable" would have as much credibility as an A on a report card. Parents, however, understand much more readily the word "stable," than they do the letter A.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Professionals emphasize the fact that teachers must seek to measure directly the students' abilities to perform in the subject area; teachers should teach for real, coherent understanding. The literature tells us that the teacher should facilitate, recognize, and evaluate literacy development.

In Goodman's (1977) miscue analysis, the kinds of mistakes a student makes while reading are taken note of. If the reader says "rat" instead of "mouse" that reveals that he or she does indeed understand that the story is about a small animal, therefore his or her reading comprehension is proceeding in a good literacy pattern. The student's reading material is selected and prepared, then audiotaped. The teacher is made aware of what to listen for.

As the human brain has a natural tendency to complete patterns begun (Rye, 1982), cloze procedures are especially good; the student has to make maximum use of context clues in predicting missing words in sentences. There are grammatical patterns in language. The reader's innate ability to produce grammatically appropriate sentences will help determine the word needed (Porter, 1987).

Process interviews are supported by the literature because of the insights the teacher gains into the students' understanding of reading strategies. The teacher talks informally with students, making notes on how each student chooses a book, how he or she gets ready for reading, what the student does when he or she comes to a word he or she doesn't know, how individual students remember what they have read, and other things (Wisconsin State Reading Association, 1990).

The idea of sharing what one has written with others is very motivational. Most students love to share their own ideas. Culminating exhibitions, in which students show others what they have learned or share with others what they have written, are endorsed by educators. Visiting other classrooms to read to those classes an original story by the student is a delightful literacy experiment (Rogers, 1989).

The National Association of Educational Progress (NAEP, 1990) has endorsed writing evaluations. Students are asked to write on assigned topics; their stories are then rated by teams of readers who assign grades according to standard criteria. This is a type of essay exam in which students must think and synthesize what they know about a topic. It is a very good process activity.

Clay (1990) uses informal inventories in her work with students. They are checklists which the teacher uses in her informal observations of the students' behaviors during the language arts. As the true measurement of literacy development is derived from the observations of students by their teachers, it seems only natural that the teachers would have some kind of checklist with which to record these observations. Some of

the standards used on these forms in checking literacy skills are: evident, not evident, stable, emergent, not interested, interested, eager.

In using portfolios of students' work (Bartoli and Botel, 1988), an ongoing record of student progress is kept. Students choose samples of their best work, including all indicators of achievement (tapes, pictures, papers) to be saved. Through the viewing of these samples of work done over time, students and teachers may track true progress of literacy in the "footprints" of their works.

The support the literature provides is in agreement with educators that one cannot be an expert teacher without being an expert evaluator who recognizes literacy development patterns and knows how to evaluate them. Johnston (1987) maintains that teachers as evaluators should use productive methods to record classroom behaviors, such as: running records, interviews, observations, and portfolios.

Teacher observation is the fundamental technique for assessing children's concepts about the functions of literacy (Teale, Hiebert, and Chittenden, 1987). Literacy patterns of development will show themselves if the teacher knows to look for them.

Some appropriate assessments of reading would be the performance of exemplary tasks, such as written essays, oral reading, and the use of research skills (Wisconsin State Reading Association, 1990). Actual thinking and reasoning should be involved; not the mere recitation of learned facts. The test of comprehension in reading should not be the task of putting sentences in order, but the answering of some how and why questions.

The National Commission on Testing and Public Policy (funded by the Ford Foundation) in May of 1990 urged schools and businesses to shift away from the use of standardized tests and toward the use of alternative forms of assessment (Rothman, 1990). Besides being more dependable, alternative forms of assessment would not be obviously biased toward the white middle-class population.

Keith Geiger, president of the National Education Association (NEA 1990) also urges diverse forms of assessment, in particular teacher observations, demonstrations of ability, and portfolios. An analysis of the processes of learning is what is necessary to measure literacy development. The educators' emphasis should not be on recall of details of lesson content, but rather on the understanding of the skill by the student (Calfee, 1987).

Since true assessment is based on teacher observation, that assessment should be more informal, open-ended, and frequent. Teachers should be able to know, on any given day, how a student is doing. If they have guidelines for their observations, then these observations can be on-going and constant, and maintain their validity (Valencia and Pearson, 1987).

Children are in the process of developing hunches about how words work, and supportive teachers should be sensitive to the "used but confused" principle as a cue for helpful skill instruction (Anderson, 1990). Constructing meaning is the central purpose of reading and students try to do this, often using grammar patterns without understanding why they do so. For example, they may add s to man to make it plural because they feel that is the way to make plurals. When the teacher sees this effort, she should then teach the child rules for plurals; this would be the optimum time, as the child has a need to know. In this way, the teaching of skills "tail" does not wag the reading "dog" (Anderson, 1990). No more than twenty percent of instructional time should be devoted to skills activities.

The true measurement of real learning is done in the evaluation of the processes students use. When teachers

say 'I know you can do it.' 'Go ahead and try.' 'Take your time.' 'I'm here to help you.' then they are freeing up a student to learn in his or her own way, to use his or her own processes to solve problems. In evaluating the processes a student uses to solve a problem, the teacher may note: First, he read through the problem. Then, he talked to himself about what was important to deal with. He wrote down some facts. He read the problem again. Then, he went back to the facts he had written down, and added two more sentences. He had solved the problem.

Children should be helped to be self-evaluators. In doing so, they should be asked to consider a number of questions: What can you do now that you couldn't do earlier in the year? What represents your best work? Why? What is hardest about writing or reading? What do you enjoy most about these subjects? (Levi, 1990). As children evaluate what they have done and discuss alternative approaches to problems and work collaboratively, they discover new strategies. The teacher can raise questions that extend focus beyond content to consideration of how problems are approached. Learners must be engaged in their own learning, which includes self-evaluation, gaining of new perspectives, and making of goals (Slaughter, 1988).

An understanding of literacy processes is the basis of supportive literacy instruction. Teaching supports the development of literacy (Haney and Madaus, 1990).

Children have an internalized rule structure for grammar (Fischer and Lazerson, 1984). They learn sounds, then syllables; then they put those together. Language is innate; all human beings will learn language if exposed to it. Students have the "rules of grammar" inside them, with language being the catalyst that pulls the rules out (Chomsky, LAD: Language Acquisition Device). As a child grows older, he or she becomes selective and uses only those sounds he or she needs and those that are reinforced by the child's environment. Students learn language by learning that words play roles. First, a child learns object words, such as dog, mama, bottle; next come action words (verbs) and then personal and social words (Fischer and Lazerson, 1984). The child is a self-regulating organism: He or she takes in information, accommodates it, assimilates it, and grows from the experience. The teacher uses effective teaching supports and extends learning; the teacher cannot control the development of literacy (Slaughter, 1988).

Good assessment is always authentic and trustworthy (Valencia, 1990). By authentic, it is meant that the

assessment should assess real reading, not the ability to make words plural or divide them into syllables. In order to be trustworthy, the assessment should have clearly established procedures for gathering information (observations, written work, interviews, etc.) and for evaluating the quality of that information.

Anderson stresses that the mind is a "fire to be kindled, not a vessel to be filled" (1990). The language is there, in the Broca and Wernicke areas of the brain. Today, teachers should be there in the sense of supporting the learning processes--kindling the fire.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

In addition to the results of standardized tests, teachers would become aware of and use methods of assessment of literacy development through whole language techniques. The author's goal was that real learning would be measured and documented through the use of ecological assessment forms, by all second grade teachers participating in the program.

Behavioral Objectives

The author's specific objectives were:

1. Students will write, on a subject of their choice, a short story, to be at least six sentences long with illustrations optional, to be published in a school-wide book of students' writings.

2. At the end of the implementation period, all second grade teachers will report using the Observation Checklist for Literacy Development and other ecological assessment forms, as a basis for instructional decisions.

3. Students will, in a collaborative learning effort, visit between second grade classrooms with the purpose of reading to them writings produced by themselves.

4. To assess strategic reading behavior and to help students become aware of their own reading processes, the teachers will talk informally with students, using questions from the Reading Behavior Form as guidelines.

5. To secure an ongoing record of student progress, students will choose samples of their best work, including all indicators of achievement, to be saved in a portfolio.

Measurement of Objectives

Objective one. In the interest of promotion of literacy, it was planned that each student would write on a subject of their choice, a short story, to be at least six sentences long with illustrations optional, to be published in a school-wide book of students' writings. These stories would meet the criteria set forth in the Checklist for Acceptable Stories (Appendix B). The school-wide book of students' writings would be "published" at the end of May, 1991, and another one the end of February, 1992. Two different groups of second graders would be involved. Although the author planned to call this a "contest" to promote writings, in reality each student in the entire school would have an entry in the book, if he or she turned a story in. Each student would receive a copy of the book. The author expected this objective to be met by eighty-five percent of all the students in the program.

Objective two. In measuring and documenting real learning, the Observation Checklist for Literacy Development was to be used. If, out of the thirty-eight items on the Checklist, thirty-four or more were marked stable, this would be equal to an A; if between twenty-eight and thirty-three were marked stable, this would be a B; if between twenty-two and twenty-seven, this would be a C; if between seventeen and twenty-one, this would be a D; under seventeen stable marks would be considered an F.

At the end of the implementation period, the author expected that three out of the five second grade teachers would report using the Observation Checklist for Literacy Development and other ecological assessment forms as a basis for instructional decisions.

Objective three. Students would welcome the opportunity to share their writings with others. They would do this by participating in at least one visitation per month to another classroom to read their own writings. In order to assure systematic observation of this activity, a checklist would be provided measuring six components of literacy development. A score of five to six checks in the Yes column would be equal to an A; four checks in the Yes column would be equal to a B; three

checks in the Yes column would equal a C; two checks in the Yes column would equal a D; one check in the Yes column would equal an F.

Out of a total of one hundred students in the second grade, the author felt confident that at least seventy-five of them would participate in this oral reading program.

Objective four. In order to assess strategic reading behavior and to help students become aware of their own reading processes, the teachers would talk informally with students, using questions from the Reading Behavior Form as guidelines. Teachers would be able to group students according to their strategic reading behaviors. The author has done an analysis of a variety of reading behaviors and, in the interest of convenience and simplicity, has formulated three categorical groupings into which students may be classified. These groupings have been given names for the sake of identification; they are Twirlers, Twiddlers, and Twinklers. A descriptive analysis of the three groups is found in Appendix E. A checklist of seven questions is provided, which lists three probable answers and one write-in, according to the three grouping types. Checks by a's would indicate learning strategies used by Twirlers;

checks by b's would indicate learning strategies used by Twiddlers; checks by c's would indicate learning strategies used by Twinklers. More than three checks by any one letter would indicate a student is in that grouping. For example, checks by four a's, one b, and two c's would place a student in the Twirler group. Checks by d's (the write-in answer; provided in case the answer the student gives does not fit into category a, b, or c) would indicate a case for teacher judgment. If there happened to be a lot of write-in answers, (three or more d's), then this would be where the teacher would place the child in a group, at her discretion. This grouping would help clarify and facilitate the teacher's understanding of student behaviors, and her handling of them.

To secure an ongoing record of student progress, the author planned for students to choose samples of their best work, including all indicators of achievement, to be saved in a portfolio. A checklist would be provided in Appendix F for the items that should be included in the portfolios. Sheets listing these things, along with criteria for them, would be included in the front of each student's portfolio. The author expected that her class of twenty students would be the only class keeping portfolios.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The problem was the measuring and documenting of real learning in natural circumstances was not being done in the author's workplace.

Vincent Rogers, Director of the Alternative Assessment Project at the University of Connecticut, gives examples of assessment procedures as inculcating higher thinking skills, such as drawing conclusions, presenting original stories, and having small group discussions of ideas. Ruth Mitchell, who is the associate director of the Council for Basic Education and author of an upcoming book on student assessment, also gives some common alternative assessments: writing tests, portfolios, culminating exhibitions, and hands-on experiences (Willis, 1990).

It is true that many professionals in the field of education feel the need for alternative assessments; the standardized test is simply not enough. The vision of students becomes too limited when there are only fact recall tests to measure literacy development.

In their quests for true measurement of literacy development, teachers have re-assessed the value of teacher judgment in observing children. Sheila Valencia, a teacher at the University of Washington in Seattle, suggests teachers observe as children pick up books, turn the pages, and read to a friend or a stuffed animal. Does the child realize the book is upside-down? Does he "pretend read"? Does he try to "sound out" the words? Does he pay attention to the pictures? All of these things tell about a child's literacy development.

PROPEL, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, is a collaboration of the Pittsburgh Public Schools, the Educational Testing Service, and Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education; it is a study of the student portfolio, in which students gather a diverse range of their works and save them to keep track of their growth. Portfolios model personal responsibility in keeping track of and reflecting on one's own work. They also allow students to become informed and thoughtful assessors of their own histories as learners (Wolf, 1989).

The Perry L. Drew Elementary School in East Windsor, New Jersey, is an open school experience in which students and teachers are loosely teamed, allowing for much support of individual literacy development.

Each student is assigned to a guiding teacher who meets privately with students. There are no grades; teachers arrange their desks in a rough square in the center of a large, open, carpeted space, to permit quick planning meetings and supervision. The benefits students derive from this are: freedom from threat (they feel secure), communication emphasis, and personal manipulation and making of his or her own world.

In 1990, the NAEP (National Association of Educational Progress), which provides the only nationally representative sample of student performance at certain ages and grade levels, made its most extensive use of performance-based items in assessment (Rothman, 1990). The assessment included math questions assessing students' use of calculators, open-ended math and reading questions, and science questions that require students to draw responses or write essays. It also, for the first time, measured students' writing abilities based on a portfolio of materials students had already produced.

The performance-based components of the 1990 NAEP made up about thirty percent of the total battery. This assessment was expected to provide substantially more information about student abilities than past NAEP tests, which asked primarily multiple-choice questions.

Bernard R. Gifford, spokesman for the National Commission on Testing and Public Policy joins the ranks of educators and business people who urge schools and businesses to shift toward the use of alternative forms of assessment (Rothman, 1990). His Commission, upon completion of a three year study on testing (funded by the Ford Foundation), concluded that schools and businesses are increasingly relying on standardized, multiple-choice tests to make critical judgments about individuals and institutions. The Commission urges a change to alternative forms of assessment that can measure performance in school and on the job; there needs to be a broader range of information considered in evaluating employees and students. The seventeen member Commission was made up of leaders from education, business, labor, and civil rights groups. Their report is entitled "From Gatekeeper to Gateway: Transforming Testing in America." One of the key thoughts in the report is that society has and continues to experience testing as a "hostile gatekeeper."

Under a proposal put forth by Governor Evan Bayh, all Indiana students would have to demonstrate mastery of basic "workplace skills" in order to earn a high school diploma (Education Week, 1991). Students will

have to demonstrate basic proficiency in such areas as reading, writing, computation, communication, problem solving, and "life skills" by the age of sixteen. Those who were unsuccessful would have to stay in school until they mastered the skills or turned eighteen. This is an example of how one state is approaching performance-based assessment.

There is a newly launched plan to establish a national examination system that will rely heavily on alternative methods of assessment, including projects and portfolios (Rothman, 1991). Sponsoring this is the National Center on Education and the Economy and the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh. They are currently lining up states and districts to participate in this plan, of which the first eighteen months will be a developmental phase to demonstrate whether it is feasible at all. To get it off the ground, they have been awarded 2.45 million dollars in foundation grants. The plan is scheduled to be in full operation by the year 2000.

Clay, noted educator and author, endorses many types of alternative assessments, some of which are: informal inventories, book conferences, running records, miscue analysis, and cloze tests (Clay, 1990).

Clay is considered a pioneer in process evaluation, having introduced the term "emergent reading" in 1966. She believes that assessment must address the distinction of teaching the child how to learn, therefore empowering the child to learn independently.

Students should be able to demonstrate that they have learned enough skills and content required to "move up." At Walden III High School in Racine, Wisconsin, students must exhibit oral and written presentations before a committee in order to graduate (Willis, 1990). This is a good example of culminating exhibitions, which are excellent process evaluation tools.

Shanker of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) has urged the use of other indicators, in addition to test scores, to measure school performance (Rothman, 1989). He maintains that traditional standardized tests measure a narrow range of student abilities. He also believes that they are flawed measures and urges that (as they are now) they be scrapped. States should develop new assessment tools that measure a broader range of student abilities.

A teacher assessment project at Stanford University attempted to assess the work of students over time (Bradley, 1989). This was conducted by Lee S. Shulman, Professor of Education. Twenty teachers constructed portfolios

during the 1988-89 school year. Each teacher was given a set of instructions regarding the form of the portfolio and the procedures to follow. Considerable latitude was given in determining the substance of entries in the portfolios. The aim of this project was to create prototypes for "a new generation" of assessments. By viewing this keeping of portfolios and analyzing the results, it was hoped that some standards of assessment could be formulated that would measure ongoing learning.

The collecting and saving of student work is also an interest of Senta A. Raizen, the Director of the National Center for Improving Science Education. She states that teachers are in the business of collecting samples of student work. She also maintains that trust and faith in classroom teachers must be re-established; there must be confidence placed in their ability to evaluate what students do.

Description and Justification for Solutions Selected

The author intended to share her ecological assessment forms with the other second grade teachers in her workplace and monitor, on a monthly basis, the use of the forms. Teachers were given the freedom to decide how they would personally use them with their students; they could use one for every student, or they could use the forms with only students who appeared to have difficulty in literacy development.

The author planned to collect the forms every six weeks, file them under the teacher's name, and give out new ones. Teachers were encouraged to use them.

Along with the ecological assessment forms, whole language learning activities handouts were available; the teachers could choose to do any or all of the activities. The purpose of these handouts was to serve as an impetus to literacy development. The author anticipated the whole language learning activities to be catalysts to literacy; progress in literacy, hopefully helped along through these activities, would be measured and documented by the ecological assessment forms.

Report of Action Taken

When the implementation period started, the author's principal announced that the assessment forms would be available to all teachers who wished to use them. Therefore, the author quickly adjusted her program to deal not only with second grade teachers, but with all who expressed an interest. This really turned out better, because the author was able to see the use of the forms with students of different ages.

For the sake of brevity and convenience, the author gathered the set of four assessment forms (The Observation Checklist for Literacy Development, the Checklist for Acceptable Stories, the Systematic Observation Checklist for Oral Reading of Original Stories, and the Reading Behavior Form) into a half-page booklet format (eight and one-half by five inches); each booklet consists of nine pages, with a place provided on the front cover for the name of the student. The entire booklet is entitled Observation Checklist for Literacy Development. Hereafter, when the Observation Checklist is mentioned in this author's report, it will mean all four assessment forms.

The author encouraged the use of these booklets by providing handouts listing whole language activities; activities which the teachers could use at their discretion (Appendix G). Teachers received a handout once every two months.

After the first six weeks, one teacher suggested more columns be added to the Observation Checklist, so that it would cover six six-week periods. In this way, much less paper would be used, and teachers could see at a glance a student's progress over the entire school year. The author immediately used this suggestion, adding columns to her master copies. Therefore, the teachers were able to keep the one booklet per student throughout the entire implementation period.

Students were excited to write stories when they found that they would be put into a book! After the first book was "published" in May of 1991, and every student took one home, most students considered themselves official authors. In the fall of 1992, students were looking forward to submitting their stories, and were even planning what they would write.

Teachers were relieved that, at last, they had in their hands an objective measurement for acceptable stories. The Checklist for Acceptable Stories

measures the very basic properties of creative stories, without taking away the personality of the author, or turning the writing experience into a negative thing. In grading a story, the teacher looked for the following criteria: characters, plot and setting, basic punctuation, and a total of at least six sentences. She checked in column Yes, No, or Maybe. The author made the criteria simple so that it could be met easily enough to avoid discouraging young inexperienced writers. Also, teachers could very quickly decide if the story was acceptable or not, saving them stress in decision making.

The Observation Checklist for Literacy Development uses the following measurements: Not Evident, Evident, Stable. Reading, writing, spelling, and attitude are evaluated in this five page summary. The teacher simply checks in the appropriate column whether the particular skill is not evident, evident, or stable. Not evident can be considered an F or a D, evident a B or C, and stable an A. However, it is best not to translate these descriptors into letter grades because, in that way, they become negative. Very basic skills are listed; for example, some items are: can retell story, reads rhythmically, recognizes words with dipthongs, can

identify short vowels, carries work through until completion, asks higher order questions.

Students visited between classrooms to read orally their own personal writings. This was done in the afternoons under the supervision of the teachers. To evaluate the students' oral reading, the Systematic Observation Checklist for Oral Reading of Original Stories was used. This was the first time the teachers had ever had a systematic evaluation instrument for oral reading. The instrument is brief and to the point, covering the following skills: reads loudly and clearly, reads with confidence, writing has a plot, a setting, and characters; student wants to write stories for the purpose of sharing them (attitude). As the teacher listened to the student read, she simply checked in the column "Yes" or "No."

In order to assess strategic reading behavior and to help students become aware of their own reading processes, the author designed a Reading Behavior Form which effectively describes how the person behaves when he or she learns. Research tells us that behavior has a lot to do with learning; some people always flip through a book and get the feel of it before they are ready to "turn to page one." Others never do that. The author

believes that teachers can turn this behavior into an asset, by using one type of behavior to complement another (perhaps producing co-operative learning). Teachers should not try to smother this behavior but, by using the questions on the Reading Behavior Form, determine which students would benefit from working together, because of the different strategies they use.

For the sake of organization, there were three groups into which students were placed, according to the answers they gave: Twirlers, Twiddlers, and Twinklers (See Analysis of Reading Behavior Form, Appendix E). A checklist of seven questions was provided, which listed three probable answers and one write-in, according to the three grouping types.

The teachers expressed much interest in the Reading Behavior Form, with the realization that it would be of limited use to them, as a tracking system with a foundation of achievement was already in place in this school district.

In securing an ongoing record of student progress, students chose samples of their best work, including all indicators of achievement, and saved them in their portfolio. A sheet listing the things which should be included in the portfolio was stapled in the front of

each student's portfolio. The author's class alone kept portfolios. Periodically, the author would check each student's portfolio with the student, one on one; amazement (on the part of the student) was often expressed at the progress that appeared so obviously, yet so subtle when measured day by day (See Portfolio Checklist, Appendix F).

Because of the training that teachers have had in assessing students, the author realized that teachers would not be fully comfortable with the checklists, unless they could convert the checks in the columns into letter grades. Therefore, with each checklist, there is a key by which this can be done.

The author left the option open as to how extensively the teachers wished to use the Observation Checklist. They were allowed to use the booklet with all their students or a selected few. The fact was accepted that this would be an assessment in addition to regular assessment procedures (standardized tests and report cards), and that this would take extra time on the part of the teachers. Therefore, the author tried to be very accommodating to them.

This program was begun the middle of April, 1991, when the author picked up the list of teachers who had signed up to participate in the program. Using this list, the author then determined how many booklets each teacher needed. All of the teachers wished to use the alternative assessments with their lowest achieving students, therefore the author provided all seven teachers with five booklets each. Each booklet consisted of nine half-pages, stapled together at the top, with a front page stating the title Observation Checklists for Literacy Development and a space for the student's name. Pages one through five were a checklist covering the reading, writing, and spelling processes; page six was a Systematic Observation Checklist for Oral Reading of Original Stories; page seven was a Checklist for Acceptable Stories; pages eight and nine were a Reading Behavior Form. A Reading Analysis Form was given to each teacher in explanation of the Reading Behavior Form. This gave information needed to interpret the check marks by the questions, and also explained the grouping system.

Teachers began to use the booklets immediately, most of them bemoaning the fact that they had not had them at the beginning of the school year. During the

first week, the author met with the teachers and gave them the Whole Language Learning Activities handout for months one and two. She explained the purpose of the handout (to spur literacy development) and encouraged the use of at least some of the activities. Teachers were to expect a Learning Activities handout once every two months (during the school year). In going over the use of the checklists, the author pointed out to them that they were to keep the booklets until the end of school, marking progress in them each time they filled out report cards. Any lack of progress was also to be marked. The author would check with each teacher each six weeks to keep track of how things were going, and discuss any problems that might come up.

All booklets were collected at the end of May, 1991. Even though the teachers had used them for only two six-weeks periods, they had had enough time to become acquainted with this "grading system" and were impressed with the amount of information gained about their students. The author filed the booklets under each teacher's name and saved them, in the event that data would be needed in the future. Over the summer, she studied them, making note that the most improvement shown was in the reading skills area. Ten students showed progress from "not evident" to "evident" in specific reading skills.

During the summer of 1991, many Observation Checklists for Literacy Development booklets were printed and put together by the author. In the interest of saving paper and reducing bulkiness, the Reading Behavior Form was taken out of the booklets, to be used as a separate handout. This was an improvement, as this form was used one time only with students, in placing them. After that was done, it was generally not referred to again.

In August of 1991, the school year started again, and again the author put out a list for teachers to volunteer to be a part of the alternative assessment program. Most of the original seven teachers rejoined, plus five more. All teachers elected to use the booklets with their five lowest achieving students. The author gave Learning Activities Handouts for months three and four to the teachers and discussed with them the procedures for using both the booklets and the Learning Activities Handouts.

The time schedule for marking the booklets (every six weeks) would be the same. The author would collect the booklets the last of January, 1992, which would be the end of the fourth six-week period of the year.

Learning Activities Handouts were given four times; once every two months. Problem clinics were optional, to be held when problems arose. Only three were held, as teachers felt competent to follow the program. They had confidence in what they were doing; they were being allowed to follow their own professional judgments, which put them in a comfortable position.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Problem and Solution Strategies Utilized

The problem was that the measuring and documenting of real learning in natural circumstances was not being done in the author's workplace. Informal, process assessments had not been treated as valid. Procedures such as systematic observation of students had been greatly devalued. Teachers did not realize nor know how to measure definite signs students exhibit as they grow in literacy.

Solution strategies used by the author were: assessment forms designed by the author to measure on-going learning, a reading behavior form to assist teachers in determining students' learning styles and placing them together according to learning style behaviors, the keeping of portfolios, and lists of learning activities (in a handout form) to help in promotion of literacy.

Results

Outcome one: The author is pleased with attaining a ninety-five percent participation rate in the writing and turning in of an acceptable story. Every student in the entire school was invited to do this. These stories were published in a school-wide book entitled Write On! Each student who had turned in a story had their story printed in the book and could take a copy of the book home to keep.

The second school-wide book of students' writings will be published in March, 1992, instead of February, 1992, because of the need for more time.

Outcome two: At the end of the implementation period, all second grade teachers did not report using the Observation Checklist for Literacy Development and other ecological assessment forms, but several teachers from other grades did. As the author made adjustment for this at the very beginning, she was not surprised to find that only two out of five second grade teachers participated.

Outcome three: As the implementation of the practicum was broadened to include not only second grades, but all grades, students were visiting between all grades to read orally. Teachers were usually

delighted to have students come and read their original stories to their classes, but scheduling was difficult at times. Teachers desired to do more of this sharing than they had time for.

Outcome four: To assess strategic reading behavior and to help students become aware of their own reading processes, the teachers were to talk informally with their students, using questions from the Reading Behavior Form as guidelines. The purpose of this was to group students according to their learning behaviors. However, teachers were not able to take full advantage of the grouping plan, as they were required to group students according to achievement; nevertheless, they were able to gain insight into student behaviors by using the information on the form. The author feels that this objective was at least twenty-five percent achieved, because teachers did use the questions from the Reading Behavior Form to assess students' reading behaviors.

Outcome five: The objective of using portfolios to secure an ongoing record of student progress was achieved one hundred percent with the students in the author's room. This was as planned (See Table 2).

Table 2

Behavioral Objective Rating Scale

Key: 1 = Objective not attained.
2 = Objective partially attained.
3 = Objective nearly attained.
4 = Objective attained, but with changes.
5 = Objective attained completely.

	Measurement Device	Items	Conversion Key	Rating by author at end of implementation.
1. Students will write, on a subject of their choice, a short story, to be at least six sentences long with illustrations optional, to be published in a school-wide book of students' writings.	Checklist for Acceptable Stories	4 items	4 Yes Checks = A 3 Yes Checks = B 2 Yes Checks = C 1 Yes Check = D	5
2. At the end of the implementation period, all second grade teachers will report using the Observation Checklist for Literacy Development and other ecological assessment forms, as a basis for instructional decisions.	Observation Checklist for Literacy Development	38 items	34 Stable = A 28 to 33 Stable B 22 to 27 Stable C 17 to 21 Stable D	4
3. Students will, in a collaborative learning effort, visit between second grade classrooms with the purpose of reading to them writings produced by themselves.	Systematic Observation Checklist for Oral Reading of Original Stories	6 items	5 Yes Checks = A 4 Yes Checks = B 3 Yes Checks = C 2 Yes Checks = D	4
4. To assess strategic reading behavior and to help students become aware of their own reading processes, the teachers will talk informally with students, using questions from the Reading Behavior Form as guidelines.	Reading Behavior Form	7 items Check a, b, c, or d.	More than three checks by any one letter indicates a student is in that grouping. Checks by d's indicate a case for teacher judgment.	2
5. To secure an ongoing record of student progress, students will choose samples of their best work, including all indicators of achievement, to be saved in a portfolio.	Portfolio Checklist	5 Items	Checkmark, if there; write-in comments possible.	5

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Discussion

At the end of the implementation period, there was a mixture of twelve teachers out of thirty-six on the faculty who were using or had used the alternative assessment forms over the eight month period. Some comments made by the teachers were:

> "This is such a positive way to report on a student's progress."
>
> "I want these checklists back, so that I can see the ongoing progress of these students; I can almost chart it."
>
> "Strengths of students leap out at me, whereas before I emphasized their weaknesses."
>
> "I can see things I could never see before in some of my weaker students."
>
> "Such a simple way to keep track of skill development!"

Teachers who used the Observation Checklist for Literacy Development much preferred this type of assessment to the report card format which they are required to use. They all found instructional decisions much easier to make when using these forms.

Putting all four of the alternative assessment forms into a half-page booklet proved to be a very valuable suggestion. In this way, the paperwork was not overwhelming, and teachers had a history of the child's

literacy development literally "in hand." There was no backlog of forms to complete to determine if the child had certain skills; simply a check in a column would give the teacher the information she needed. Time was also saved. The chart layouts were very conducive to quick scanning. An entire year's progress could be seen within a matter of minutes.

The Reading Behavior Form was at first looked upon with skepticism, as grouping by learning behavior is an innovative idea in this area. But, after some thought, teachers began to make positive comments about how it might be a good thing to do!

The author was very excited about the surge of interest that was shown when students began to write in order to share. They vied with each other for chances to read orally in another classroom. Had it not been for the Checklist for Acceptable Stories and the Systematic Observation Checklist for Oral Reading of Original Stories, teachers would have been at a loss as to how to evaluate these very real evidences of literacy development.

The publication of the students' stories in a book became the epitome of achievement for them. The author considers this one of the high points of her practicum.

Because the author kept portfolios in her room alone, she provides the lone testimony as to the worth of this effort. The Portfolio Checklist was an excellent guide, a constant reminder of the contents needed in the provision of a well-rounded education. She found the portfolios so useful and informative that she plans to continue to use them in future classes, always with the Portfolio Checklist.

The author feels that this program "Evaluating Student Learning in Language Arts in the Primary Grades through Whole Language Assessment Techniques" could be more successful in a more receptive atmosphere; twelve out of thirty-six teachers participating is not a bad number, but if the teachers were given true freedom in the evaluation procedures, that number probably would have been closer to thirty out of thirty-six. This is, however, an encouraging step in the right direction of true measurement and documentation of literacy development. Teachers who participated were truly impressed with the great amount of information concentrated in a package of such simplified form.

Recommendations

The author recommends the use of her alternative assessment forms in any school which desires to put the emphasis on the positive. She firmly believes this type of process evaluation gives teachers information that they do not have ready access to in the standardized "report card." These forms should be used in a booklet format, because this is so convenient and easy to use and keep. It is suggested that in parent conferences, these booklets be shared with the parents, as they will be able to understand the terminology, such as "stable" and "evident"; they will understand what is going on with their child.

The author recommends the use of the Reading Behavior Form at the beginning of the school term, so that grouping can be facilitated immediately.

It is recommended that more extensive use be made of the learning activities handouts. All activities listed do encourage thinking and reasoning.

More teachers should keep portfolios, as the checklists make it easy for teachers to determine how literacy development is proceeding. Portfolios provide a good overall view of the student's progress.

Dissemination

In the near future, the author plans to present this program to her local school board. She is currently talking with them about using alternative assessment in an alternative-type school which they are planning.

The author plans to use her alternative assessment forms in a booklet format in her future work. Whether she is in a classroom or in an administrative position, she plans to promote this type of assessment.

Because the teachers were so impressed with the organization and simplicity of the program, the author is going to submit it for possible publication to a professional journal.

The author foresees the time when she will use this program as a springboard to write articles on the results of using alternative assessment techniques. She will offer these for publication.

References

Anderson, W. (1990). Fundamental principles of supportive literacy instruction. In W. Anderson (Ed.), Support for At-Risk Readers. Proceedings at Nova University Summer Institute. Fort Lauderdale, FL.

Bartoli, J. & Botel, M. (1988). Reading/learning disability: An ecological approach. New York, New York: Teachers College Press.

Bayh, E. (1991, January 23). Mastery of workplace skills skills urged as mandate in Indiana. Education Week, p. 23.

Bradley, A. (1989, September 13). Three-year effort to create a 'New Generation' of teacher assessments nears completion. Education Week, p. 23.

Calfee, R. (1987). The school as a context for assessment of literacy. The Reading Teacher, 40, 738-744.

Cannell, J. (1988). Nationally normed elementary achievement testing in America's public schools: How all 50 states are above the national average. Educational Measurement: Issues and Practices, 7, 6.

Clay, M. (1990). Research currents: What is and what might be in evaluation. Language Arts, 67, 288-297.

Durkin, D. (1987). Testing in the kindergarten. The Reading Teacher, 40, 766-770.

Fischer, K. & Lazerson, A. (1984). Human Development. New York, New York: W. H. Freeman and Co.

Geiger, K. (1990, October). Testing the value of testing. National Education Association Today, p. 2.

Goodman, K. (1977). Miscues: Windows on reading. Urbana, Ill.: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills.

Harste, J. (1989). New policy guidelines for reading. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.

Johnston, P. (1987). Teachers as evaluation experts. The Reading Teacher, 40, 744-748.

McKenna, M. & Kear, D. (1990). Measuring attitude toward reading: A new tool for teachers. The Reading Teacher, 45, 626-636.

Neve, C. (1985). Brain-compatible learning succeeds. Educational Leadership, 43, 83-85.

Rogers, V. (1989). Assessing the curriculum experienced by children. Phi Delta Kappan, 70, 714-717.

Rothman, R. (1990, May 30). Ford study urges new test system to 'Open the gates of opportunity'. Education Week, pp. 1, 12.

Rothman, R. (1989, October 11). Learning goals said to demand better assessment. Education Week, p. 12.

Rothman, R. (1990, January 24). NAEP will make its most extensive use of performance items. Education Week, pp. 1, 12, 13.

Rothman, R. (1991, January 30). Promise, pitfalls seen in creating national exams. Education Week, pp. 1, 18.

Rye, J. (1982). Cloze procedure and the teaching of reading. Exeter, NH: Heinemann Educational Books.

Slaughter, H. (1988). Indirect and direct teaching in a whole language program. The Reading Teacher, 41, 30-34.

Squire, J. (1987). Introduction: A special issue on the state of assessment in reading. The Reading Teacher, 40, 724-731.

Teale, W., Hiebert, E., & Chittendon, E. (1987). Assessing young children's literacy development. The Reading Teacher, 40, 772-777.

Valencia, S. (1990). Alternative assessment: Separating the wheat from the chaff. The Reading Teacher, 44, 60-61.

Valencia, S. & Pearson, P. (1987). Reading assessment: Time for a change. The Reading Teacher, 40, 728-730.

Willis, S. (1990). Transforming the test. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Update, 32, 3-6.

Wisconsin State Reading Association (1990). Toward an ecological assessment of reading progress. Schofield, Wisconsin: Wisconsin State Reading Association.

Wixson, K., Peters, C., Weber, E., Roeber, E. (1987). New directions in statewide reading assessment. The Reading Teacher, 40, 749-753.

Wolf, D. (1989). Portfolio assessment: Sampling student work. Educational Leadership, 46, 35-39.

Bibliography

Farr, R. & Carey, R. (1986). Reading: What can be measured? Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association, Inc.

Gendler, T. (1988). The testing paradox. Basic Education, 33, 7-10.

Haney, W. & Madaus, G. (1989). Searching for alternatives to standardized tests: Whys, whats, and whithers. Phi Delta Kappan, 70, 683-687.

Leslie, C. & Wingert, P. (1990, January 8). Not as easy as A, B or C. Newsweek, pp. 56-58.

Levi, R. (1990). Assessment and educational vision: Engaging learners and parents. Language Arts, 67, 269-273.

Simmons, J. (1990). Portfolios as large-scale assessment. Language Arts, 67, 263-267.

Wiggins, G. (1989). A true test: Toward more authentic and equitable assessment. Phi Delta Kappan, 70, 703-713.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE: AWARENESS OF DEVELOPING LITERACY

Questionnaire

	YES	NO	MAYBE
1. Do you see a need for other methods of evaluating students in addition to standardized tests?	___	___	___
2. Do you think a teacher can make instructional decisions regarding a student by observing his or her behavior?	___	___	___
3. In noticing the way in which inventive spelling is used by a student, could the teacher draw any conclusions at all concerning the literacy development of the student?	___	___	___
4. Do you think it is a good idea to measure daily or weekly progress in each student?	___	___	___

APPENDIX B

CHECKLIST FOR ACCEPTABLE STORIES

Checklist for Acceptable Stories			
	Yes	No	Maybe
Has characters.			
Has a plot and a setting.			
Sentences start with a capital letter and end with appropriate punctuation.			
There is a total of at least six sentences in the story.			

APPENDIX C

OBSERVATION CHECKLIST FOR LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

Observation Checklist for Literacy Development

	Observation			Interpretation
	Not Interested	Interested	Eager	
Responding to Text Classroom process: Before reading				
During reading				
After reading				
Oral reading process:	Not Evident	Emergent	Stable	Comments
Uses context clues				
Demonstrates self-correcting behaviors				
Reads rhythmically				
Recognizes punctuation				
Recognizes main idea				
Summarizes events in the story and puts them into complete sentences				
Can retell story				
Makes predictions based on facts of story				

79

	Not Evident	Emergent	Stable	Comments
Spelling process: Decodes and comprehends sentences in which:				
the vowel is between two consonants (short vowels)				
the e on the end of words makes the first vowel long				
two different vowels are together (the first one is long)				
the words have double vowels				
the words have r-controlled vowels				
the words have diphthongs				
Learning Behavior:				
Is aware of and uses strategies in learning				
Approaches unfamiliar texts positively				
Collaborates with other students				
Active in class discussions				
Reads silently at every opportunity				

	Not Evident	Emergent	Stable	Comments
Writing process:				
Writes one or more unrelated statements				
Writes two or more related statements but without a stated central idea.				
Writes two or more related statements with a stated central idea (s)				
Elaboration of the central idea (s) with details, examples, arguments				
Variety in word and sentence choices and /or considerable elaboration				
Use of such writing devices as unusual examples, metaphor, humor, contrast logic (if/then, since, therefore, either/or)				

	Not Evident	Emergent	Stable	Comments
Choice of Activities:				
Chooses challenging games and projects				
Shows interest in new activities				
Wants to figure out the why and how of all projects				
Carries work through until completion				
Choice of Books:				
Looks through books carefully before deciding on one				
Uses "book language" in class conversation				
Voluntarily reads in free time.				
Asks higher order questions concerning the author, setting, plot of book				

	Not Evident	Emergent	Stable	Comments
Class Comments: Is curious to go beyond the lesson				
Shows interest in accomplishments of fellow students				
Is willing to "work" overtime" in order to complete an assignment				
Transfers knowledge from one subject to another				

Note: Parts of this checklist were taken from Bartoli and Botel's Reading/Learning Disability: An Ecological Approach and the Wisconsin State Reading Association's book: Toward an Ecological Assessment of Reading Progress.

APPENDIX D

SYSTEMATIC OBSERVATION CHECKLIST FOR ORAL READING OF ORIGINAL STORIES

Systematic Observation Checklist
for Oral Reading of Original Stories

	Yes	No	
Reads loudly and clearly			
Reads with confidence			
Writing has a plot			
Writing has a setting			
Writing has characters			
Wants to write stories for the purpose of sharing them			

Key

5 to 6 Yes's = A
4 Yes's = B
3 Yes's = C
2 Yes's = D
1 Yes = F

APPENDIX E

READING BEHAVIOR FORM

Reading Behavior Form

1. What is the first thing you do when you get the book in your hands?

_____a. Turn it over, feel it, and flip through it.
_____b. Turn to the first page and wait for the teacher.
_____c. Do not open it; play with it.
_____d. Student's personal response. Write in.

2. What do you do if you come to a word you don't know?

_____a. Skip it and go to the next one.
_____b. Try to sound it out or wait for someone to help.
_____c. See if the pictures give a clue and, if not, make up a word.
_____d. Student's personal response. Write in.

3. What would you try to tell someone about what you read?

_____a. The main characters associated with the story.
_____b. The last part that the student read.
_____c. The overall story.
_____d. Student's personal response. Write in.

4. What would help you become a better reader?

_____a. Being able to move around, without restraint.
_____b. Having a story that is very easy to read.
_____c. Reading familiar stories, such as fairy tales.
_____d. Student's personal response. Write in.

5. How do you choose a good story to read?

_____a. Check number of words on page, attractiveness of book.
_____b. Look at cover and first couple of pages; notice use of color and pictures.
_____c. Look for favorite characters and familiar themes.
_____d. Student's personal response. Write in.

6. How do you remember what you read?

_____a. Look it up again.
_____b. Concentrate on what is being read.
_____c. Compare it with another story.
_____d. Student's personal response. Write in.

7. Where do you like to be when you read?

_____a. On a beanbag, or other very informal place.
_____b. Sitting in a chair.
_____c. With company (another person or animal).
_____d. Student's personal response. Write in.

Analysis of

Reading Behavior Form

The Reading Behavior Form enables the teacher to place students in one of three reading groups. The reading groups were formed using an analysis of like strategic reading behaviors displayed by students.

KEY: In checking the a, b, c multiple choice items after each question, the student should be placed in the first grouping in which he/she scores three checks.

Categorical names have been arbitrarily assigned to the three groupings simply for the convenience of teachers. The names may, however, be inherently descriptive.

Group a: Twirlers

Flips through all the pages of the book. When the right story is found, glances briefly at all the pages in the story. Decides quickly if the story will be interesting or not. Has little patience with carefully deciphering the words, and reads hastily. His or her mistakes in reading tend to result in language which still makes sense (semantic acceptability). Most of the time, has fair grasp of story plot, inspite of not "paying attention."

Group b: Twiddlers

Carefully opens book and tentatively turns pages. Not particularly interested in what happens in the story. Would like to read at his or her leisure. Tends to move lips while reading silently. In oral reading, points to each word and "sounds out" those he or she is unsure about. Stops at words he or she does not know, and waits for someone to help. Is interested in following the teacher's directions. Needs help in drawing conclusions and predicting. Likes to read alone and in quiet.

Group c: Twinklers

Opens book to any page in the story, then is totally amenable to every distraction. Does not like to keep up, and makes up words and sometimes sentences. Does not like to be pinned down to words, and tosses them in and out continuously. Keeps the right story idea most of the time. Likes to tell plot, setting, and characters of familiar stories. Relies on visual cues a lot. Is a good storyteller. Seems to be able to enjoy himself in reading, despite loving distractions.

APPENDIX F

PORTFOLIO CHECKLIST

	Date	Name	Complete Sentences	Handwriting	Capitalization and Punctuation
LIBRARY BOOK REPORTS					

	Date	Positive Attitude	Spoke Loud enough and clearly enough	Knowledgeable of Subject
ORAL PRESENTATION				

	Date	Creativity	Use of Color, Line, and Shape	
ARTWORK				

	Date	Followed Directions	Correctness	Handwriting	Capitalization and Punctuation
ENGLISH ASSIGNMENT PAPERS					

	Date
JOURNAL	

APPENDIX G

LEARNING ACTIVITIES HANDOUTS

Whole Language Learning Activities

Theme for months one and two: Getting to Know Me

The ideas presented are for the teacher to choose from during a period of two months. A star by an item indicates that the author will furnish the form for that activity.

1. Bring some words to class that tell about you; cut them out of the newspaper, magazines, or copy them from signs. Paste them down, add some more words, and make a story about yourself.

2. Explain how to make your favorite sandwich, in four steps or more.

3. Choose your favorite storybook character to enact.

4. Design a race car, van, or motorcycle that reveals a quality that you like in yourself.

5. Using only your favorite foods, put together a meal (Do a picture).

6. Write a letter to your teacher explaining why you did or did not like your library book.

7. Take a turn at being the reading teacher for two minutes.

8. Do a cloze story on yourself.*

9. Write a riddle about yourself.

10. Read a story out loud to another student (or to the class), substituting your name for one of the main characters.

11. Plan your own birthday party invitation and menu.

12. In pairs, you write a description of your partner, while he or she writes a description of you.

13. In ten minutes, write down all of the words you can think of about yourself.

14. Draw a cartoon of yourself.

15. Do the Garfield Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (The Reading Teacher, May 1990).*

16. If you could be a body part, what body part would you be? Explain why. (Foot, head, arm, finger, ear, mouth).

17. Describe your favorite game and explain how to play it.

18. If you were a book, how would your cover look? (Do a picture).

Whole Language Learning Activities

Theme for months three and four: Becoming Aware of Others

The ideas presented are for the teacher to choose from during a period of two months. A star by an item indicates that the author will furnish the form for that activity.

1. Choose three people in class and ask them the following questions, filling in the answers yourself:

*What is your favorite color?_____
What is your favorite food?_____
Who is your favorite rock star?_____
Who is your favorite actor and actress?_____
What is your favorite TV program?_____
What is your favorite song?_____
What is your favorite sport to watch?_____
What is your favorite sport to play?_____
What do you do best?_____
What are your hobbies?_____
What is your favorite movie?_____
What is your favorite place to visit?_____
What do you like best about yourself?_____

2. Using the information gained in number one, write a story about that person.

3. Get a friend to describe what he or she would be if he or she was: an animal, a flower, a car, a house, the weather. Using directions from him or her, draw a picture of these things.

4. Create a large open area in the room. Explain to students that you will give them a set of words. Each end of the open space represents one of the words. They are to move to the end that represents the word with which they identify. They are to notice who made the same choices as themselves. Are you more:

open, closed day, night spring, fall cadillac, volkswagen
bird, fish physical, mental island, bridge peace, war
ping pong ball, paddle

I like to:

eat pizza, eat hamburger see movies, read a book go fishing,
watch TV, play outside roller skate, ride a bike go swimming
tell jokes, hear jokes go shopping, stay home have friends over,
get up early, sleep late wash the car, visit friends
get dressed up, wear old clothes wash the dishes listen to hard-rock, listen to country-western

5. Make up an advertisement for your best friend. Do this on paper, as in a full page magazine advertisement.

6. Monogram activity: Think of a friend's initials and find a positive, appropriate adjective to go with each initial.

7. Promote someone as a public figure. You are this person's campaign manager and you want the public to vote for him or her. Design a brochure, a slogan, and a jingle that will promote his or her image and strengths.

8. In ten minutes, write down all of the words you can think of to describe your teacher.

Whole Language Learning Activities

Theme for months five and six: Expressing openness

The ideas presented are for the teacher to choose from during a period of two months. A star by an item indicates that the author will furnish the form for that activity.

1. Have students bring in a magazine picture of someone they trust or distrust. Have them share their pictures and explain their attitude toward this person.

2. Have students draw names of a secret pal. Instruct them to try to get their pal to know who they are in pleasant and subtle ways for two school days. They are going to have to guess who their secret pals are. Before they do the guessing, have them write down their choice and hand them in to the teacher. At the end of the day have the students discuss and guess.

3. In pairs, you write a description of your partner, while he or she writes a description of you.

4. You will need a large space and blindfolds for half of your students. Have students pair off. Have them stand next to each other. Hand a blindfold to one of each pair of students and instruct them to blindfold their partner. Instruct the "sighted" partner to lead the blindfolded student around the area for a three minute journey. No talking or whispering. Have them return and switch roles. Repeat. Then ask the following questions:
   a. What feelings did you have while blindfolded? while leading?
   b. How did your partner "tell" you he or she trusted or distrusted you?
   c. Was it important for you to feel you could trust your partner? Why?

5. Complete the following sentence: I like _____ because _____

6. Complete the following sentence: I wish people wouldn't _____ _____

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Whole Language Learning Activities

Theme for months seven and eight: Developing Social Skills

The ideas presented are for the teacher to choose from during a period of two months. A star by an item indicates that the author will furnish the form for that activity.

1. Students will select one of their own papers which they think is good, and display it in a prominent place.

2. Every day, the teacher will choose a student to be her helper.

3. All the names of students will be put in a jar. Each child will pick a name out of the jar and that person will be his "partner" for the week. All week long, he or she will do nice things for his partner.

4. The teacher will designate a "Child of the Week." A bulletin board will be made, featuring the child. On Friday, every child has to write something nice about the "Child of the Week."

5. Write: If you could be anything you want to be, what would it be? Describe.

6. Write: If you could be called anything in the world, what would it be? Make your own name tag.

7. Teacher will have an assortment of awards to give out. Examples: Star Speller, Good Behavior, Participation in Class, Wonderful Writer.

8. Class discussion of people needing other people. Give each student one-half of a smiley face; each student must find the person with the half that matches theirs.

9. On a solid color T-shirt, iron on words such as "Star Student" or "I'm finishing my work." and let a student wear the shirt for one day.